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SUBJECT: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: INTRODUCING THE NEW CIVIL LIBERTIES,
JUSTICE, AND HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Ref: A) USEU BRUSSELS 826, B) USEU BRUSSELS 1075

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: In the past, the European Parliament's (EP) Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE) served as the EP's platform for debate on often controversial issues regarding U.S. policy, including Guantanamo detainees and data transfer. If the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, the new committee will have significantly expanded legislative powers over many of these areas. This report provides an initial look at LIBE's new leadership. END SUMMARY.

THE COMMITTEE'S EXPECTED NEW MUSCLE

¶2. (SBU) With the notable exception of asylum and migration issues, the European Parliament (EP) currently lacks formal decision-making power in many areas of responsibility of the Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs Committee (abbreviated by the French acronym LIBE). In fact, EU Member States, meeting as the Council, have often ignored the EP's opinion on justice and home affairs issues. For example, in 2004 Member States disregarded the EP's determination that the U.S.-EU Passenger Name Records agreement for the transfer of airline data was illegal; in 2008 the Council ignored the EP's insistence that governments explain their alleged involvement in renditions and secret prisons.

¶3. (SBU) However, the ratification and entry-into-force of the Lisbon Treaty (which could be as early as January 2010) would expand the EP's competence in many of LIBE's areas. The EP would have legislative control over policies relating to border control, visas, and immigration. Moreover, EP assent would be necessary to implement a large number of agreements concluded with third countries. Data privacy and transfer will likely continue to take center stage, as LIBE already began pointed discussion over the issue of the U.S. Terror Finance Tracking Program (TFTP) and SWIFT (bank information data transfer to the U.S.) during its first meeting in July.

¶4. (SBU) For these reasons, the new committee will be more important to the USG than ever before. While several fierce opponents to U.S. data privacy and anti-terrorism policies, including Dutch Liberal Sophie In't Veld and UK Liberal Baroness Ludford, will remain very active on the committee, there are several newcomers in key leadership positions who have shown more openness towards the United States. We will be actively working to expand relations with these individuals, as well as the proven transatlantic MEPs, during the upcoming session.

WHO'S WHO IN THE NEW COMMITTEE

¶5. (SBU) The LIBE committee leaders and political group coordinators (with the exception of the Socialist-Democrat group coordinator, who has not yet been appointed) are:

-- Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar, Chairman (Socialist-Democrat S&D group, Spain): A constitutional lawyer and a regional politician in the Spanish Canary Islands, Aguilar was Justice Minister in the Zapatero government from 2004-2007. He studied in the U.S. and

earned a Masters Degree in Law and Diplomacy at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

-- Kinga Gal, First Vice-Chairwoman (EPP, Hungary): A lawyer specializing in human rights, Gal has been an MEP since 2004 and has focused mainly on the protection of minorities (with special interest for the Roma population).

-- Sophie In't Veld, Second Vice-Chairwoman (ALDE, Netherlands): An MEP since 2004, In't Veld has made her reputation as a "data privacy passionaria." She was a vocal opponent on data transfer to the U.S., on the issues of Guantanamo, and on the alleged extraordinary renditions. In't Veld in 2007 filed a FOIA action in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia seeking access to any records the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and State held on her in their databases, which she later dropped.

-- Salvatore Iacolino, Third Vice Chairman (EPP, Italy): A new MEP, Iacolino's career has been in local government where he worked on regional development, reform of public administration, and sanitary development.

-- Kinga Goencz, Fourth Vice-Chairman (S&D, Hungary): Former Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs from April 2006 to April 2009, Goencz is also the daughter of former President Arpad Goncz. In interviews she has criticized the former Bush administration, but expressed hope for further cooperation with the new U.S. administration.

-- Simon Busuttil, EPP coordinator (Malta): A lawyer by profession, Busuttil has been a MEP since 1994 and has been active in immigration policy and border management. In 2008 he traveled to Washington as part of an EP delegation to discuss border and visa issues with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and he noted after his return that the EU had a lot to learn from the U.S. on

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--- LIBE ed) are:

border management.

-- Csaba Sogor, Second EPP coordinator (Romania): A theologian and Presbyterian priest, Sogor represents the Hungarian minority in Romania and has championed minority rights, including for the Roma.

-- Jeanine Hennis
former European Commission official, Hennis-Passchaert was elected MEP in 2004. A member of the Transport Committee (and substitute in LIBE) in the previous term, she was the drafter of a report on airport security, where she argued that security should not impede free competition. She is a strong supporter of data privacy and is

opposed to the current conditions for data transfer to the U.S.

-- Raul Romeva I Rueda, Green coordinator (Spain): A professor of international relations, Rueda has worked at the UN and is close to NGOs, such as OXFAM. He has been an MEP since 2004 and is only a substitute member of the LIBE committee. His main interests are human rights, disarmament and development. He was also an active and critical (substitute) member of the Temporary Committee on the Alleged Use of European Countries by the CIA for the Transport and Illegal Detention of Prisoners ("CIA Committee").

-- Timothy Kirkhope, ECR coordinator (UK): A British Conservative MEP since 1999, Kirkhope has occasionally been the leader of the Tories delegation since 2004. Under-Secretary of State at the UK Home Office in the 1990s, he was in charge of immigration and international police cooperation. In 2003, he led a commission on asylum and immigration, making the recommendation for the UK conservative policy on these issues. Kirkhope was also an active member of the temporary CIA Committee and was one of the rare MEPs to strongly oppose the EP's conclusions, stressing that the committee had been driven by an anti-American agenda.

MURRAY